

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method of transferring articles to/from an article handling section, using a self-propelled carriage capable of travelling along a fixed path, the carriage comprising a movable body capable of moving in a longitudinal direction with respect to a carriage body, a turnable body capable of turning about a vertical axis with respect to the movable body, and an article supporting body disposed over the turnable body, said method comprising the steps of:

halting the self-propelled carriage alongside the article handling section;

performing initial turning of the turnable body about the vertical axis so as to cause a front end of the article supporting body to face the article handling section;

moving the movable body whilst turning the turnable body about the vertical axis, so that the front end of the article supporting body is positioned substantially right at a lateral side of the carriage body so as to face the article handling section;

performing a transfer of an article between the article supporting body and the article handling section; and

causing the article supporting body to perform a reverse operation so as to be accommodated on the carriage body.

2. A method of transferring articles to/from an article handling section, using a self-propelled carriage capable of travelling along a fixed path, the carriage comprising a movable body capable of moving in a longitudinal direction with respect to a carriage body, a turnable body capable of turning about a vertical axis with

respect to the movable body, and an article supporting body capable of extending and retracting with respect to the turnable body, said method comprising the steps of:

halting the self-propelled carriage alongside the article handling section;

causing the article supporting body to make an extending movement;

performing initial turning of the turnable body about the vertical axis so as to cause a front end of the article supporting body to face the article handling section;

moving the movable body whilst performing intermediate turning of the turnable body about the vertical axis, and causing the article supporting body to make a retracting movement;

performing final turning of the turnable body about the vertical axis, so that the front end of the article supporting body is positioned substantially right at a lateral side of the carriage body so as to face the article handling section;

performing a transfer of an article between the article supporting body and the article handling section; and

causing the article supporting body to perform a reverse operation so as to be accommodated on the carriage body.

3. A self-propelled carriage comprising a movable body capable of moving in a longitudinal direction with respect to a carriage body, and moving means, said movable body comprising a turnable body capable of turning about a vertical axis, and turning means, said turnable body being mounted thereover with an article supporting body, wherein

the movable body performs a longitudinal movement whilst the turning body performs a turning movement at least partially in a synchronised manner.

4. The self-propelled carriage according to claim 3, wherein a cover member for covering the article supporting body is located on top of the carriage body in such a manner that at least a portion thereof is turnable in unison with the turnable body.

5. The self-propelled carriage according to claim 3 or 4, wherein the article supporting body is a fork device capable of extending and retracting in forward and backward directions.